

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 RIYADH 00377 161143Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00
EB-08 FRB-03 INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-11 TRSE-00 XMB-02
OPIC-03 SP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 AGRE-00 L-03
H-01 CTME-00 NSC-05 SS-15 STR-07 CEA-01 DODE-00
PA-01 /117 W

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R 161030Z MAY 78
FM USLO RIYADH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 483
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 377

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: ETRD, SA
SUBJECT: SAUDIS BACK AWAY FROM SUPPORT OF COCA COLA DEBLACKLISTING

REF (A) RIYADH 316, (B) AMMAN 3483

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1. DURING MAY 13 CONVERSATION WITH USLO OFFICER AHRAR KHOJA,
SAUDI BOYCOTT DIRECTOR, INDICATED THAT SAUDIS ARE BACKING
AWAY FROM THEIR PREVIOUS STRONG SUPPORT OF COCA COLA'S
APPLICATION FOR DEBLACKLISTING. THE REASON SEEMS TO BE A
RECENT NEW YORK TIMES STORY WHICH HIGHLIGHTED DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND THE CENTRAL BOYCOTT OFFICE OVER
THE DEBLACKLISTING OF COCA COLA. THIS UNWANTED

PUBLICITY PROMPTED CROWN PRINCE FAHD TO MEET WITH KHOJA FOR A BASIC REVIEW OF BOYCOTT POLICY. WHILE KHOJA DESCRIBED ONLY SKETCHILY WHAT HE HAD BEEN TOLD IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE CROWN PRINCE INSTRUCTED HIM THAT HE SHOULD CONTINUE TO ASSIST AMERICAN FIRMS IN THE BOYCOTT LEAGUE ONLY IF HE COULD DO SO DISCREETLY. KHOJA SAID HE HAD ALSO BEEN TOLD TO CONTINUE EFFORTS TO CON- VENE THE BOYCOTT CONFERENCE WHICH FAHD CONSIDERED THE ONLY FORUM WHERE THE SAUDIS COULD EXERT THEIR INFLUENCE EFFECTIVELY AND OFF THE RECORD. CONTRARY TO KHOJA'S STATEMENT THAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD DEBLACKLIST COCA COLA ON ITS OWN IF THE CONFERENCE WERE NOT CONVENED SHORTLY, THERE WAS NO INDICATION THAT THE CROWN PRINCE WOULD EVER CONSIDER ACTING OUTSIDE THE ARAB LEAGUE AS KHOJA HAD INDICATED EARLIER. HOWEVER THE STEAM IN THE SAUDI DRIVE TO GET A CONFERENCE SEEMS TO BE GONE.

2. FAHD ALSO DISCUSSED SAUDI RESPONSE TO AN EFFORT BY THE CBO TO SETTLE THE COCA COLA QUESTION BY SENDING OUT BALLOTS BY MAIL. REPUTEDLY THE VOTS SENT IN ARE REMAINING STRONGLY AGAINST COKE. WHILE FAHD INDICATED THAT A CONFERENCE WAS THE ONLY PROCEDURE THAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD ACKNOWLEDGE AS VALID, HE ADVISED KHOJA TO SIMPLY NOT RESPOND TO THE CBO BALLOT RATHER THAN TO OBJECT IN WRITING. HE CAUTIONED THE DIRECTOR NEVER TO PUT ANYTHING IN WRITING TO THE CBO WHICH COULD LATER BE USED TO DOCUMENT SAUDI DISSENT.

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3. KHOJA CLEARLY HELD COCA COLA RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NEWS STORY AND SAID THAT U.S. FIRMS WHO EMBARRASSED SAUDI ARABIA BY DISCLOSING SAUDI EFFORTS ON THEIR BEHALF WERE ONLY HURTING THEMSELVES. WITH THE SAUDIS LAYING LOW AND THE CBO ATTEMPTING TO INSTITUTE MEMBERSHIP VOTES BY MAIL THE CONFERENCE SEEMS FARTHER AWAY THAN EVER. COMMENT: CROWN PRINCE'S NEW INSTRUCTIONS TO KHOJA CONTAIN A BISIC LESSON FOR ANYONE WHO HOPES THAT SAUDI ARABIA WILL CHAMPION THEIR CAUSE IN THE ARAB WORLD; THE SAUDIS CAN BE EXPECTED TO FADE AWAY WHEN THEY FIND THEMSELVES OUT IN FRON ON AN ISSUE.
GNEHM

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